

# Legislative News



February 5, 2010

## MDHE Staff Testify on Higher Education Budget

### Higher Education Legislation Filed This Week:

[HB 1956-Rep. Sue Schoemehl](#) (D)  
Authorizes an income tax deduction for certain public college tuition costs.

[HB 1999-Rep. Bryan Pratt](#) (R)  
Specifies that if Missouri loses a Congressional district following the 2010 redistricting, the ninth member of the University of Missouri Board of Curators will be a student curator with voting rights.

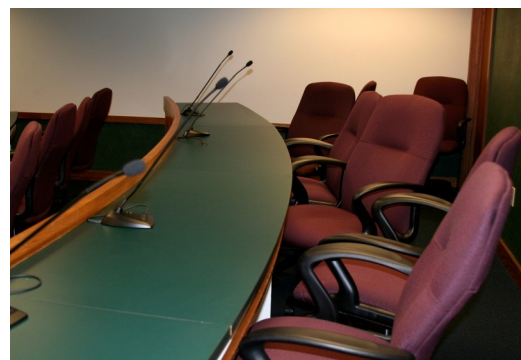
[SB 899-Sen. David Pearce](#) (R)  
Establishes the Missouri Promise Program to provide financial awards to students pursuing higher education at certain institutions.

### Committee Meeting

The [House Higher Education Committee](#) will meet Tuesday, February 9 at 8:00 a.m. in HR6. The committee will hear [Representative Mike Thomson's HB 1473](#), which revises the grade point average required for renewing an Access Missouri Scholarship for certain students.

Department of Higher Education staff testified before Senate and House appropriations committees this week to provide information about the higher education budget. Members of the [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) focused primarily on the agreement between the state's public colleges and universities and the Governor to hold tuition flat in exchange for a cut of 5.2%. One line of questions focused on the fact that some institutions may actually be putting a tuition increase of up to 2.7% "on the books" but not actually charging it in the 2010-11 academic year. Senators asked why institutions didn't just go through the waiver process provided for in the so-called "tuition cap" law, which provides that many schools can only raise tuition at a rate equal to the rate of inflation, or risk being fined up to 5% of their general revenue appropriation. Senators also sought to clarify exactly what is included in the term "tuition." They were told that in this context, tuition only means tuition and general fees paid by in-state undergraduates, and does not include room and board, special course fees, or graduate tuition.

Other questions raised in the Senate Appropriations Committee included the relationship between increasing eligibility for the A+ program to include students from all public high schools and the Access Missouri program. Senators asked if the A+ expansion would be costly, and if that would affect Access Missouri funding. There were also questions about whether Access Missouri will remain the "payer of last resort" or if an expanded A+ program would become the payer of last resort.



Inside one of the house conference rooms.

The [House Education Appropriations Committee](#) also heard testimony about the higher education budget, but the committee focused on different issues. They asked about the Governor's recommendation that the scholarship portion of the A+ program be moved to the Department of Higher Education, including what impact that would have on the school improvement piece of the A+ program and whether the MDHE has sufficient staff to carry out the requirements of the A+ scholarship program.

Finally, several representatives had questions about the future viability of the Missouri Student Loan Program in light of President Obama's efforts to eliminate the FFEL Program. There was also a discussion about the appropriateness of institutions of higher education providing salary increases. MDHE staff anticipates further questions about whether salaries were raised for the current academic year and whether or not institutions plan to increase salaries for the upcoming academic year.

## LEGISLATIVE NEWS

### Student Curators Bills Filed

Two bills have been filed that could potentially alter the makeup of the [University of Missouri Board of Curators](#). Both bills address the issue of students serving on the board, but the language in the bills differs on whether having a voting student member would be required or permitted. [Representative Jill Schupp's](#) bill, [HB 1773](#), would open the possibility that a student may serve as one of the nine voting members on the board

but it would not be required. [Representative Bryan Pratt's](#) bill, [HB 1999](#), would make it mandatory for the ninth voting member to be a student in the event that Missouri loses a congressional seat after the 2010 census.

### Access Missouri Debate Gains Statewide Attention

The debate over [Access Missouri](#) award amounts for public and private educational institutions has gained media attention throughout the state this week. This attention has continued the debate over award amounts given to students attending private versus public institutions. New legislation being proposed would bridge the gap between award amounts given to students. There are two Access Missouri bills filed at this time.

The Access Missouri bill in the House, [HB 1812](#), filed by [Representative Gayle Kingery](#), has not been referred to committee, while the Senate version of the bill filed by Senators [Kurt Schaefer](#) and [David Pearce](#), [SB 784](#), is likely to be heard during the month of February. The Access Missouri legislation will be an issue that educators, parents, and students will continue to watch closely as the legislative session moves forward.

### Missouri Promise Legislation Filed in Senate



The Missouri Supreme Court building across from the Capitol.

This week, [Senator David Pearce](#) filed [SB 899](#), which would establish the Missouri Promise Program. This program would expand on the current A+ program by including all high school students in the state who meet the requirements for the program. Students who qualify for Missouri Promise would be eligible for scholar-

ships to attend a community college or vocational/technical school.

Beyond that, students who receive Missouri Promise or A+ and complete certain associate's degrees with a GPA of 2.5 or higher could receive scholarships to cover the cost of tuition or the average tuition (whichever amount is less) at a public four-year insti-

tution for up to four academic semesters. To be eligible, students must attend full-time, apply for other sources of funding, and maintain a 3.0 GPA. This second level of the program will only become available if sufficient funds are appropriated.

### Proposed Conceal and Carry Legislation

Conceal and carry legislation has shown up in the legislature again this session. Although no bills have been filed directly impacting higher education, these bills confirm that conceal and carry is still a relevant issue for the state and one that higher education must keep a close eye on. [Representative Jeanie Riddle's](#) bill, [HB 1781](#) would allow members of the general

assembly to carry concealed firearms at any meeting or committee of the general assembly or in the state capitol. [SB 740](#), filed by [Senator Jim Lembke](#), would allow prosecuting attorneys, assistant prosecuting attorneys, circuit attorneys, and assistant circuit attorneys who have completed the course required to obtain a conceal carry endorse-

ment, from certain otherwise unlawful uses of a weapon. Other significant conceal and carry bills include [Representative Dan Brown's](#) [HB 1944](#), which would lower the age to receive a conceal and carry permit from 23 to 21 and [Representative Mike Dethrow's](#) bill, [HB 1756](#), which would lower the age to 18.



A view of the Capitol hallway.